

Text by Jillian Markgraaff after Bruce Nauman's "Vices and Virtues"

A Vision of Vices and Virtues

A gleam appears through the veil of dusk,
halting my wandering footsteps
as the mutters and murmurs of fellow students fade.
I'm stuck, held in place by a flashing tower,
rumbling with questions
of perfect prudence and ambivalent anger—
they obliterate the fragile stability beneath my feet.
 Unsuspecting, I fall,
caught in the colorful tunnel vision.

**Brightness blinds my eyes,
but now, I can finally see.
I try to blink away the neon's curse,
the vicious vice;
afraid of my own shadow, sticking to me like glue,
looming behind me.
But the dancing colors know better,
and teach me to abandon my fears.**

Beams of rainbow spin in circles around my head,
shooting from the depths of the night sky.
They sear my frozen skin, leaving marks,
warming my veins
with firey fortitude and peachy pride.

Fourteen shades tickle my glowing cheek,
whispering sweet secrets into my ear;
the scent is intoxicating, taking over my body
as highlighted words echo,
and crowd the cave of my mind.

**Like tightly woven thread, they tattoo my skin,
traveling on trails of morality.**

**My body is engraved like a gemstone;
my mind is no longer my own.**

**I am nothing but a gifted guest,
painted with emerald envy,
amber-tinted avarice,
cerulean charity,
and honey-stained hope.**

With a spark, jeweled justice twinkles in the galaxy,
crashing into a blur of lawless, lilac lust—
They wage a war behind my eyes,
as I lose myself in the laden aroma of my own actions.
I become a mere reflection,
mirroring the intertwined ropes of complexities.
Like bonds gripping my wrists, they work together,
and I am unsure of who to be or how to be.

It leaves me itching, unable to resist the electric stars.

**Like a puppet, I lift my hexed hand,
caressing the mysterious, inky black sky.
I swirl the saturated paint in lazy circles,**

mixing the curious colors,
blending the borders of ethics;
dizzy, lost in the void of my own mind.